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3 March 1966

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## INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

### AFRICAN COUP POSSIBILITIES

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

Office of Current Intelligence

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
Office of Current Intelligence  
3 March 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

African Coup Possibilities

1. Only a few African governments appear at present immune to coups. South Africa, Tunisia, Egypt, Zambia, and the Somali Republic are considered stable enough to be in no danger now. Virtually all the others are so fragile that change could come at almost any time. Among these, however, the following appear to be the best candidates for quick and perhaps violent change: Burundi/Rwanda, Dahomey, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Uganda, and the Sudan.

2. All these countries possess most of the usual shortcomings that make for instability. Their governmental institutions lack competent administrators, their economies have not fulfilled the post-independence expectations of the people, and their tribal and ethnic divisions have prevented the growth of real national unity. There is usually a broad gulf between the educated elite and the masses, and many younger military and civilian officials covet the positions held by the older generation. Political power is generally centralized in the capital, and a ridiculously small military or civilian group can quickly seize the government machinery. Each state also has its own particular set of unsettling circumstances, as detailed below.

3. Burundi/Rwanda: Sharing a common history and tribal makeup until 1960, and almost constantly at odds since then, the two states are involved in plots and international agitation against each other. Extremists seem likely to increase their power in Burundi--possibly overthrowing the indolent King Mwambutsa--which would lead to greater friction with

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democratic Rwanda. The extremists would encourage the numerous exiled Rwanda tribesmen to invade their former homeland.

4. Dahomey: General Soglo ousted the civilian government of Premier Ahomadegbe late last year. The situation has not yet stabilized, and chances are good that one or more coups will follow within the year.

5. Ethiopia: The 73-year-old Haile Selassie is still the single dominant force through strength of personality, political acumen, and resolve. However, as he ages, the number of his critics is increasing, and they are becoming more vocal. Active insurgency in five border provinces is such that the military and police forces are fully occupied, and any major outburst could overtax their ability to control the country. A growing civilian and military class of young educated elite is anxious for power and for more rapid modernization. The Emperor has been able to keep opposing forces in check by intimidation, blandishment, and security control. His removal from the scene, however, would immediately open the floodgates to change.

6. Nigeria: The regime of General Ironsi still faces possible action by junior officers who are no longer constrained by their experienced seniors, many of whom were victims of the January coup. A number of these junior officers have their own strong concepts of the "New Nigeria," and they may not be in accord with those of the Ironsi group. Ironsi will be hard pressed to come up with satisfactory solutions to Nigeria's staggering problems. His failure may lead to a recrudescence of the regional and tribal bitterness that was at the base of his own coup. The result could be the fragmentation of Nigeria, and/or more coups.

7. Uganda: The recent coup by Prime Minister Obote against the moderate forces in Uganda is probably unfinished. Obote has clearly won the first round, but there are at least two potential moderate factors which have not been decisively dealt with as yet. Moderate elements of the army, representing the southern Bantu kingdoms, have not taken a clear-cut

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stand and may yet rally against Obote and his imposition of General Amin as military commander. Similarly, political factions may unite around some moderate leader, perhaps the King of Buganda, Uganda's largest region. Buganda may even try to secede from Uganda. In any of these events, Uganda could be plunged into civil war.

8. The Sudan: The moderate coalition government installed last June is fumbling along, beset by a limping economy and a serious rebellion in the south, where separatist Negroes are fighting the northern Arab army. The army has become disgusted with civilian rule in Khartoum since stepping aside in 1964. It may now feel that a return to authoritarian rule would enable the country to achieve stability. Any move by the military, however, would probably be carried out in league with one of the civilian parties, most likely a faction of the conservative Umma, which dominates the present regime.

9. Less likely candidates as the scene of upheaval, but still distinct possibilities, are Algeria, some of the French-speaking states of West Africa, and Congo (Leopoldville).

a. Algeria: Colonel Boumedienne has failed to solve the nation's pressing economic problems.

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b. West Africa: Cameroon, Chad, Mauritania, and Togo are all inherently fragile, with administrative shells that can be easily broken by dissatisfied military, labor, student, or tribal elements. Congo (Brazzaville) has been the subject of sporadic and fragmentary reporting about dissension and possible coup efforts, in part reflecting cross currents of Sino-Soviet rivalry in the country.

c. Congo (Leopoldville): General Mobutu's military regime is making very little progress in solving his country's almost impossible problems.

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There is reportedly growing opposition to his rule, and a coup effort would not be a surprise, although none of the potential leaders appears to have sufficient backing at present. Meanwhile, former premier Tshombé is lurking in Europe, waiting to make a comeback should Mobutu's fortunes decline sufficiently.

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